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# **Western Europe: Youth Attitudes and the Successor Generation**

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**A Research Paper**

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**Erratum**

Notice to recipients of DDI Research Paper *Western Europe: Youth Attitudes and the Successor Generation*  EUR 84-10068,  April 1984.

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Table 4 on page 15 is incorrect. Please replace it with the new Table 4 below.

**Table 4**  
**Partisan Change and Aging**  
**1975-83**

Percent

	Less Than 21 Years in 1975	18-29 Years in 1983	22-31 Years in 1975	30-39 Years in 1983	32-46 Years in 1975	40-59 Years in 1983	47-Plus Years in 1975	60-Plus Years in 1983
Supporting left-of-center parties in 1975	60		61		46		40	
Supporting left-of-center parties in 1983		66		58		49		46
Supporting center and right- wing parties 1975	40		39		54		60	
Supporting center and right- wing parties 1983		34		42		51		54

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# **Western Europe: Youth Attitudes and the Successor Generation**

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**A Research Paper**

This paper was prepared by [redacted]  
Office of European Analysis, with the support of  
[redacted] of the Analytic Support Group.  
Comments and queries are welcome and may be  
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**Western Europe:  
Youth Attitudes and  
the Successor Generation**

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**Overview**

*Information available  
as of 1 April 1984  
was used in this report.*

Political leaders and scholars on both sides of the Atlantic point to the left-ist politics of West European youth, the prominent role they play in the peace movement, and the rise of "dropout" youth subcultures as portents of a major shift in West European politics when the "successor generation" comes of age. The results of several recent opinion polls focusing on EC and NATO countries suggest that these concerns have some merit—particularly in the case of West German youth—but the same polls present evidence that the "generation gap" is not as wide as is frequently assumed.

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The troublesome tendencies that surveys have detected among young people in Western Europe include:

- A disregard for conventional political norms and a preference for "direct action" techniques such as demonstrations and sit-ins, which threaten further to immobilize governments in areas such as defense and economic policy.
- A propensity to support leftist political parties, which could tip the balance in favor of forces opposed to NATO and to close ties with the United States.
- A lack of confidence in the United States, unconcern about the Soviet Union, and hostility to strengthening or even maintaining their countries' and NATO's defense preparedness.

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The more reassuring trends emerging from the same surveys are:

- West European youth by and large are not alienated from their societies. They are as likely as their elders to support their countries' political and social institutions and to participate in politics. Despite extremely high levels of youth unemployment, they remain reasonably content with their economic lot and not unduly pessimistic about their economic future.
- Although younger West Europeans are more inclined than their contemporary elders to support leftist parties, their attitudes on specific issues are more moderate than their voting tendencies might indicate. For instance, the young are only slightly more supportive than their elders of the traditional left's program of economic development through centralized controls. Instead, they tend to favor a "new left" political agenda emphasizing increased citizen involvement in public decisionmaking, greater personal freedom, and protection of the environment.

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- Young people differ from their elders only slightly on issues such as confidence in US foreign policy, degree of alarm about the Soviet threat, and opposition to INF deployment. Moreover, most young West Europeans remain committed to their countries' continued membership in the Atlantic Alliance. [REDACTED]

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Because few West European youths are alienated from their societies, we believe that the younger generation as a whole will not pose a threat to political stability. We think they will, however, retain their preference for direct involvement in politics, and this tendency will impede government decisionmaking on critical issues, in the process weakening individual countries and the Alliance to some extent. [REDACTED]

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Although data limitations preclude hard and fast predictions concerning the survival of youthful political attitudes into middle age, we suspect that the current young generation will probably continue to identify disproportionately with leftist causes as it matures. This is because the "new left" inclinations of many of its members spring from such factors as their relative affluence and high level of education, which will exert an enduring influence on their collective attitudes. But taking into account the predominantly moderate views of young people, their relatively weak attachments to political parties, and the possibility of growing fragmentation between parties of the old and new left, we believe that leftist party dominance of future West European politics is not inevitable or even likely. [REDACTED]

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Given the modest age-based attitudinal differences on international issues among all age groups and most young people's support for NATO, we expect that generational replacement will not by itself bring about any dramatic changes in basic West European foreign and security policies. On the other hand, because public confidence in US foreign policy has been declining among all age groups throughout Western Europe, trans-Atlantic relations could come under increasing strain. This is especially true of West Germany where the young are strongly supportive of the new left agenda and the old are becoming increasingly disenchanted with US leadership of the Alliance. [REDACTED]

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But there are likely to be limits to the extent to which even Bonn distances itself from the Western Alliance: the views of young people who identify with center-right parties do not differ significantly from those of their parents, and young people in all parts of the political spectrum still show impressive support for NATO. [REDACTED]

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## Western Europe: Youth Attitudes and the Successor Generation

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### Introduction

Observers such as the US-based Atlantic Council and West German Chancellor Kohl have expressed fears that West Europeans under 35 years old do not share their elders' moderation on domestic issues or their support for security cooperation with the United States—and that some young people may not even share their commitment to democratic values. Observers worry that, in the short term, West European youth could prove a disruptive force in society as young people were in the late 1960s. They are also concerned that generational differences in political attitudes are now so great that dramatic changes in West European domestic and international policies—many of which will be detrimental to US and Atlantic Alliance interests—will take place when members of the present youth generation accede to positions of influence.

This paper compares the political attitudes of younger and older West Europeans, particularly in the United Kingdom, France, Italy, West Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium. Using recent public opinion data, it seeks to determine whether generational differences exist of a sufficient magnitude to augur changes in West European politics. Specifically, it addresses four questions that are frequently raised in discussions of West European youth attitudes and of the successor generation:

- Are younger West Europeans alienated from the societies and values that their elders appear to support strongly?
- Are younger West Europeans further to the left than their elders?
- Are younger West Europeans less inclined than their elders to support the Atlantic Alliance?
- To the extent that there is a "generation gap," how much is a life-cycle phenomenon that is likely to disappear as the present youth cohort ages and how much is a generational difference that is likely to endure?

### The Youth Problem in Western Europe

In postwar Western Europe, young people first emerged as a major political force in the late 1960s. Student protest movements arose that demanded reforms in universities and other institutions, espoused radical social ideologies, and opposed US involvement in the Vietnam war. Violent student-police clashes and student strikes took place in West German, Italian, and British universities, while in France, Parisian students nearly toppled the Gaullist regime in May 1968. The changes that the affected governments made in response to these demands in areas such as education and employment opportunity certainly blunted the revolutionary edge of the student movement. Nevertheless, it has become clear that West Europeans who were born after World War II hold political beliefs on both domestic and international issues that are, if not revolutionary, at least different from those of their elders.

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The clearest sign is their voting behavior. According to various polls undertaken in recent years, younger people between 18 and 34 years old in France, Italy, the Netherlands, and West Germany have been inclined to support parties of the left by margins of some 3 to 2 while a majority of their elder counterparts have supported parties of the center-right. According to a leading academic expert, such dramatic age differences in partisan preference were not present in these countries during the 1950s and early 1960s. Only in the United Kingdom and Belgium have younger people's partisan preferences not been significantly different from their elders' in recent years.

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The second sign is the conspicuous involvement of large numbers of young people in the peace movement, which suggests that the younger generation may not share the pro-American, anti-Soviet, and

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pro-Atlantic Alliance proclivities that the majority of older West Europeans are assumed to hold.<sup>1</sup> Some scholars have linked the purported neutralist tendencies of many younger West Europeans to their coming of age during an era when the American image in Western Europe had been tarnished by Vietnam and Watergate while the perception of the Soviet threat was dulled by "detente." Younger people thus may have less reason than their elders—who experienced American beneficence in the form of the Marshall plan and Soviet intimidation—to view a strong trans-Atlantic connection as either desirable or essential.

A third sign of generational difference has been the rise of an "alienated" youth subculture and outbreaks of violence involving young people. Although disaffected youth have always been present in Western Europe—for instance, the United Kingdom's "teddy boys" and "rockers"—their numbers, according to various press accounts, appear to have grown along with the propensity for violence and lawlessness. In West Germany, a substantial "alternative culture" has arisen comprising, according to some estimates, more than 10 percent of the 17- to 23-year-old population. Its members preach or practice dropping out of modern society in favor of living in communes which they often set up unlawfully in abandoned dwellings. More nihilistic groups, such as the Swiss and West German "chaotics" and the British "punks," have occasionally been involved in violent confrontations with authorities. And, of course, young people have formed the nucleus of various West European terrorist groups such as the Italian Red Brigades and the West German Red Army Faction.

West European scholars and press commentators have cited these developments as reflecting widespread alienation from society among young people—especially those in their late teens or early twenties. They link this alienation to the deterioration of the region's economic performance in recent years. Younger people have, in fact, borne the brunt of this slowdown: those under 25 have constituted about half or more of

<sup>1</sup> Although the West European peace movement dates back to the late 1950s when it was marked by such occurrences as the "ban the bomb" marches in the United Kingdom, it was not as conspicuously youthful or as large as the current variety.

the unemployed in most West European countries in recent years (table 1). This fact—and the absence of any indication that the economic situation will improve any time soon—has led some West European press commentators and academics to suggest that young people have become depressed and pessimistic, as well as indifferent or hostile toward the society they blame for their plight.

#### **Youth Attitudes in the Light of Public Opinion Data**

These developments at first blush suggest that Western Europe is heading for a future of leftist dominance of the political system, neutrality in the East-West rivalry, and growing lawlessness. We believe, however, that indicators such as current voting behavior and participation of minorities, even large ones, in social movements or subcultures present an incomplete picture of West European youth. To gain a clearer idea of the mind-set of "young Western Europe," we have tapped the results of a wide range of surveys, paying special attention to those from a European Community-sponsored "Eurobarometer" study of youth values published in 1982.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Are Younger West Europeans Alienated?**

Public opinion data suggest that "alienation" is, in fact, not particularly widespread among West European youth—at least it is no more so than among the population in general. Young people are somewhat less proud of their countries than their elders, but they are about as satisfied with the functioning of democracy and major institutions. Moreover, younger people tend to be at least as favorable as older ones to the

<sup>2</sup> Although we believe the examination of public opinion data provides the best insight into contemporary youth attitudes, this approach has some limitations. West European public opinion researchers have generally not asked identical questions from year to year; nor have they, in past years, often reported results broken down by age. Thus it is not possible to determine with accuracy how today's youth stacks up against its counterparts of previous decades—or to gain a clear idea about how today's youth will behave in the future by examining the evolution of previous young generations' attitudes as they aged. Moreover, public opinion data can only provide general indications about that small segment of the present generation of youth that will become the future West European political elite and have a disproportionate impact on society.

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**Table 1**  
**Youth Unemployment <sup>a</sup>**  
**as a Percent**  
**of Total Unemployment**

	1978	1979	1980	1981
West Germany	28.4	26.2	27.2	29.2
France	40.6	42.0	42.5	42.8
United Kingdom	44.9	44.4	46.6	41.0
Italy	61.4	60.8	62.3	61.6
Austria	36.1	36.4	33.3	36.6
Belgium	45.0	43.5	46.1	45.1
Netherlands	47.6	46.7	52.8	52.5
Norway	52.9	52.6	51.5	47.5
Spain	59.1	54.2	55.6	55.1
Sweden	40.5	39.7	42.0	39.8
EEC	42.6	46.4	47.5	45.1

<sup>a</sup> Aged less than 25.

idea of participating in the political process; indeed, in West Germany they are considerably more so. But the young do tend to place greater emphasis on direct forms of participation—such as sit-ins and protest demonstrations—rather than on more conventional means such as involvement in political parties. They do not in any significant numbers favor the use of violence to achieve political goals.

**Overall Attitudes Toward Society.** One of the broadest indicators of an individual's feelings toward his society is his degree of national pride. There is considerable evidence showing that younger West Europeans are not particularly nationalistic as a group. Studies undertaken in the late 1970s, for instance, found that only about three-fifths of young people in France, Switzerland, and Sweden expressed pride in their nation, as compared with 95 percent of young Americans. A 1982 survey in West Germany painted a particularly bleak picture for that country: in what is probably a legacy of the Third Reich and subsequent attempts by educational authorities to downplay nationalism, only 31 percent of those 18 to 30 years old voiced national pride as opposed to over 60 percent in the age group over 60. The 1982

Eurobarometer survey indicated that significant age-related differences in national pride existed throughout the European Community. Of adults over 25, 75 percent were proud of their countries and 18 percent were not; of young people 15 to 24 years old, 65 percent were proud and 26 percent were not.

Other responses, however, suggest that younger West Europeans' overall attitudes toward their societies are not markedly different from those of their elders. For instance, the Eurobarometer survey question on "satisfaction" with the way democracy is working in the respondent's country elicited virtually identical responses from those under and over 25 in all the EC member states. These ranged from fairly high levels of satisfaction in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and West Germany, to low levels in such heterogeneous countries as Belgium and Italy.

Other surveys have shown that, in the major West European countries, attitudes concerning the "representativeness" or social impact of such key political institutions as political parties and the civil service do not differ significantly by age. Both young and old Italians, Belgians, and French are fairly cynical about these institutions, while the Dutch, British, and West Germans are at least reasonably positive. An OECD-sponsored review of sociological research on youth reported that wherever they were studied in Western Europe, young people expressed highly favorable attitudes on the most basic institution: the family.

**Attitudes on Participation.** Younger West Europeans also appear to be about as positive as their elders on the issue of individual political participation. According to the Eurobarometer survey, 40 percent of West Europeans 25 years old or under believe they can have a personal impact on politics versus 36 percent of those over 25. Moreover, identical numbers of younger and older West Europeans indicated that they discussed politics at least occasionally with their friends. In West Germany, where the presence of a highly visible "alternative culture" suggests that

alienation is most acute, one 1983 poll revealed that 18- to 30-year-olds were somewhat more likely than older people to believe that people should get involved in politics and that they could have an impact on national policy. [ ]

Younger people differ from older groups mainly in their preferred form of participation. They tend not unexpectedly to be somewhat cooler than older adults toward the idea of involvement or close identification with a political party: in the Eurobarometer survey, 46 percent of those 15 to 24 said they felt close to no political party as opposed to only 32 percent of those over 25. On the other hand, according to the Eurobarometer and other surveys, younger people tend to be considerably more favorable to the idea of participation through involvement in social movements and protest demonstrations. The Eurobarometer survey revealed that 15- to 24-year-olds were more likely to approve of ecology, antinuclear, and antiwar movements, and substantially more likely to be willing to join them. An official West German study of youth indicated that among 18- to 30-year-olds, the idea of political "self-help" through petition drives and demonstrations enjoys overwhelming popularity. [ ]

The attraction of younger West Europeans to "direct action" techniques does not, in our judgment, imply a widespread preference for bringing about change by violent or unlawful means. The Eurobarometer study revealed that the number of young people who favored "revolutionary action" to achieve radical change was not much different from the number of similarly minded older West Europeans—respectively, 8 percent and 4 percent—and was dwarfed by the number of young people favoring either gradual reforms (61 percent) or "defense of society against subversion" (22 percent). Other studies by reputable polling institutions in France, Italy, West Germany, and the Low Countries have revealed that although young people are considerably more likely to indicate a willingness to participate in civil disobedience, only minute percentages indicate that they would engage in violent demonstrations. In the official West German study, a sizable 14 percent of the 18- to 30-year-olds expressed approval of house "squatting," but 85 percent rejected the use of political violence. [ ]

***Are They Really Frustrated?*** The findings cited above strongly suggest that young people—including the university-educated "successor generation" which will become the future elite—as a group do not pose a serious threat to West European political or social stability. In fact, they raise doubts about the popular image of West European youth seething with frustration and anger because of their economic predicament. The evidence suggests that while younger Europeans are concerned about their futures, they are not unduly pessimistic or angry about their current circumstances:

- The Eurobarometer survey indicates that younger West Europeans are indeed concerned about the possibility of experiencing unemployment. Forty-six percent of the men and 54 percent of the women 18 to 24 years old thought that they might not be able to find a job within the next two years; by comparison, the respective figures for individuals 25 to 39 years old were 35 and 39 percent, and for individuals 40 to 54 years old 28 and 32 percent. The survey also showed that younger West Europeans were more discontented with their job and career prospects than with any of the other measured aspects of their life, such as relationships with family and friends, housing, and leisure activities.
- Nevertheless, evidence from surveys undertaken last year in France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands suggests that the young in those countries have not despaired despite their difficulties in the labor market. Young people expressed levels of "satisfaction" with their overall current economic situation which were very similar to those of older adults in all these countries. West Germany was an exception, but even there youths were only slightly more dissatisfied. Young people, indeed, tended to be slightly more optimistic than their elders concerning their personal economic prospects over the coming year. And while young people were somewhat more pessimistic about their "lifetime" economic situation than older groups, substantial majorities in all of these countries believe that they will do as well or better economically as their parents over the course of their lives.

### ***Successor Generation Back to the Books?***

*West European campuses, spawning grounds for that segment of West European youth that will become the future elite, by and large have not been centers of political radicalism in recent years. According to a West German sociologist, the Free University of Berlin—which in the 1960s was a hotbed of radical protest—is now so quiet that it resembles “the abandoned parking lot of an office building on week-ends.” Reports from the US Embassy in Stockholm and Consulate in Milan suggest that students in both Sweden and Italy have been forgoing politics in favor of paying increased attention to studies and personal development. In Italy this trend is evidenced in declining participation for elections to student governing bodies—and perhaps also in the fact that independent Christian candidates have won an increased share of the votes in these elections at the expense of candidates affiliated with leftist parties.*

*France, in contrast to the other West European countries, has suffered student disturbances recently. In May 1983, thousands of French students participated in protest marches which ended in violent*

*confrontations with the police. Unlike the student protesters of 1968, those of 1983 were not seeking radical changes in society. They were, in fact, predominantly conservatives who were seeking to block an egalitarian educational reform proposed by the Mitterrand government, which they feared might devalue their diplomas by easing admission requirements to universities. Leftist students have been quiet since the mid-1970s. In recent French student elections, leftist factions suffered a sharp drop in support while a rightwing faction gained slightly.*

*We suspect that the source of declining student radicalism is the poor job market for university graduates. A recent report in the French magazine Le Point indicated that in France, for instance, only very small percentages of social science and humanities students—who comprise the majority of the student body—could look forward to employment in their fields. Insecurity has probably demoralized the student left—and made it wary of getting involved in legal difficulties which might further limit their job prospects.*

- Perhaps most significant, 83 percent of the men and 84 percent of the women aged 15 to 24 told the Eurobarometer survey that they were either very or fairly satisfied with the life they led. These percentages were higher than for any other age group.

Even the specific group which has been most adversely affected by Western Europe's economic slowdown—the young unemployed—does not appear as pessimistic and alienated as might be expected. The official West German youth study, for instance, found only small differences in basic political outlooks between a small subsample of unemployed youth (50 people) and the general sample of youths. A poll undertaken before the 1983 British election of first-time voters—three-fifths of whom had been unemployed during the previous year—indicated a majority favored the Conservatives over Labor, hardly a sign of

mass disaffection. Our review of surveys in other major West European countries indicates that although unemployed young people are somewhat more to the left of their employed peers, they are no more prone as a group to favor violent protest or to reject basic political institutions.

***Are Younger West Europeans Leftist?*** Younger West Europeans are somewhat further to the left ideologically than their elders, although those professing to be leftists are still a minority, albeit a large one. At the same time, younger people in most West European countries are no more hostile to business or favorable to increased governmental intervention in society than are their seniors. They do differ, however, from older

**Table 2**  
**Political Self-Placement in the European Community, by Age**

Percent

	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-59	60 or More	Average
Extreme left	7	12	12	8	7	7	8
Left	20	23	26	22	16	14	19
Center	31	30	29	35	35	34	33
Right	14	14	13	16	19	19	17
Extreme right	4	2	3	4	8	10	6
No reply	24	19	17	15	15	16	17

groups in being more favorable to what social scientists call "postmaterialist" values: increased individual freedom, participatory decisionmaking, and protection of the environment. Their voting tendencies may reflect a belief that parties on the left are more inclined to emphasize those values. In fact, the traditional left's program, with its emphasis on rapid modernization through centralized controls, to some extent is antithetical to postmaterialist values. The more sophisticated young people realize this, in our judgment, and this probably accounts in part for the emergence of new left or ecological parties which compete with the socialist and Communist parties of the "old left."

**Youth and the Old Left.** The Eurobarometer survey asked its respondents to place themselves on a standard ideological scale ranging from extreme left to extreme right. The results, displayed in table 2, indicate that West Europeans under 30 are substantially more likely than those over 30 to indicate they hold views that are left of center. At the same time, young people placing themselves in the center or to the right of center outnumbered those on the left by margins of 49 to 27 percent among the 15- to 19-year-olds, 46 to 35 percent among the 20- to 24-year-olds, and 45 to 38 percent among the 25- to 29-year-olds (table 2). Age-related differences in ideological preference were fairly uniform throughout the European Community with the exceptions of Belgium—where there was virtually no age-related ideological difference—and Greece and West Germany, where younger people (under 25) were more to the left of their elders than in the other countries.

Although younger people may be more inclined than older ones to consider themselves to be on the left, they do not appear to be any more inclined to espouse conventional leftist ideas on the economy and the role of government. For instance, surveys taken in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, West Germany, and Italy in recent years indicated that in all but West Germany, 18- to 30-year-olds were no more likely than older adults to be critical of the role of corporations or trade associations in society. And, with the exception of France, they were not inclined to take a more positive view of trade unions than older adults; even in France, age-related differences on this question were minimal. Perhaps most important, on the crucial question of whether governmental powers should be strengthened to deal with national problems, young people in France, Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands were not significantly more favorable than their elders. In West Germany, where the left-right ideological gap is wider than average, younger people by a substantial margin were actually more hostile to the idea of increased governmental intervention than those over 30.

**A "Postmaterialist" Gap.** Younger West Europeans do differ ideologically from their elders in one key response: they place greater emphasis on what has been variously called in the United States the "new politics" or "postmaterialist" agenda. This involves demands for increases in personal freedom, in greater citizen involvement in the policymaking process, and

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the preservation of the environment. Studies undertaken from the early 1970s onward have consistently found that younger West Europeans, including those now in their early and middle thirties, are significantly more likely than older ones to favor postmaterialist values over traditional materialist ones—such as maintenance of social order and price stability—when offered a forced choice between them. In the Eurobarometer survey, for instance, 19 percent of the 15- to 24-year-olds and 17 percent of the 25- to 34-year-olds were “pure postmaterialists” as compared with an average of less than 7 percent among those over 45. According to the survey and other studies, postmaterialism is positively associated with self-perceived leftism. [ ]

We believe that the relatively strong preference of younger West Europeans for the “new politics” is linked to the following factors:

- The impact of Western Europe’s postwar success: older West Europeans, particularly those now over 50, experienced personal hardships during their early years in the 1930s and 1940s because of economic and political instability and war. They thus came to place a high value on social order and personal material gain. By contrast, younger West Europeans have matured within an environment of economic plenty and political safety because of the outstanding success of Western Europe’s postwar economic and political institutions. With their material needs basically satisfied, young West Europeans have had the opportunity to turn to higher order values such as self-expression and environmental preservation.
- The expansion of higher education: between 1960 and 1980, university enrollments increased over three times in Western Europe—from 5 to 16 percent of the university-age population. The bulk of the rise has been concentrated in the humanities and social sciences. Thus the number of individuals within the younger generation who have acquired the skills and background knowledge required for political participation—the central feature of the new politics agenda—is considerably greater than in the older generation. Evidence from Eurobarometer

surveys taken in the late 1970s indicates that students and younger people in occupations requiring advanced educations were up to three times more likely to be pure postmaterialists than workers or housewives. [ ]

We believe that the marked tendency of those under 35 to vote for parties of the left and the new left stems from their preference for the “new politics”—which leftist West European parties come closer to embodying at present—rather than a widespread desire for old-style socialism. Indeed, using 1979 Eurobarometer data, we have discovered that, in the major West European countries and in the Low Countries, postmaterialists under 35 were twice as likely to support parties of the left than of the center-right, and that this fact explained about three-fifths of the difference in the relative tendency of those under and over 35 to support leftist parties. In our judgment, the rise of the new “ecological” parties in France and Belgium and the “Greens” in West Germany highlights the new politics orientation of the younger generation. All of these parties have garnered substantial youthful support—between 10 and 20 percent of the under-35 population—by emphasizing an environmental and participatory agenda rather than a traditionally socialist one. [ ]

***Leftism and the Successor Generation.*** The course of West European politics and policy will be shaped at least as much by the views of its future leading politicians, civil servants, and journalists as by those of the younger generation as a whole. Because Western Europe’s elite is generally drawn from the ranks of the university educated, we have examined the ideological views of the younger members of this group (those under 35). [ ]

According to data offered in various national surveys, the extent of ideological differences between younger and older educated West Europeans varies from country to country. In Belgium and Italy the successor elite generation is, much like the current elite, oriented toward the center-right side of the political

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spectrum; indeed, younger educated Italians are to the right of Italian youth as a whole. Educated younger Frenchmen are about half again as likely to place themselves on the left side of the ideological spectrum as their older counterparts but are no more leftist than the rest of the younger generation. In the Netherlands the ideological age gap is fairly wide, but, because age differences on other measures of ideological orientation such as attitudes toward business and government intervention are small to insignificant, we think that it would be unwise to exaggerate their importance. [redacted]

In West Germany the successor generation is far to the left of the current elite and even farther to the left than less educated younger West Germans. Moreover, better educated younger West Germans appear to be exceptionally hostile to corporations; some 70 percent of them in one poll said they thought that activities of business were harmful to West Germany as compared with only 17 percent of the current elite. At the same time, a recent USIA survey of the successor generation revealed very low levels of support for the concept of a "planned socialist economy"—and a fairly favorable attitude toward such concepts as "capitalism" and a "free market economy." Taking these findings into account and the fact that the overwhelming majority of younger educated West Germans (some 80 percent) are opposed to increased governmental intervention into society, we believe that the West German successor generation is unlikely, despite its self-expressed ideological inclinations, to be a force for traditional socialism. [redacted]

#### **Do Younger West Europeans Support the Alliance?**

In our judgment, public opinion data broadly confirm that age-related differences exist in views toward the United States, the Atlantic Alliance, and related international issues. In comparison to their elders, younger people tend to be more skeptical of US foreign policy, less concerned about the Soviet threat, and thus less favorable to an increased defense effort, especially the stationing of new US nuclear missiles in Western Europe. At the same time, age differences on international issues are generally small in most countries, indicating that the popular source of the growing differences between US and West European policymakers emanates on the West European side from the broader public rather than from young

people alone. Only in West Germany are youth, particularly the educated young future elite, notably more negative than the rest of the West German population on a number of key security issues. Nevertheless, substantial majorities of younger people throughout Western Europe continue to want their countries to remain in NATO. [redacted]

#### ***United States Less Trusted, Soviets Less Feared.***

USIA surveys in recent years have revealed that younger West Europeans tend to have even less confidence in US foreign policy than their elder compatriots. For instance, asked to indicate in mid-1983 whether they had confidence in the ability of the United States to deal with world problems, 52 percent of the lesser educated between 18 and 34 years old in the United Kingdom answered in the affirmative as compared with 62 percent of those over 35. The comparable figures for Italy were 46 and 54 percent, and for West Germany—where confidence appears to be extremely low among all sectors of the populace—26 and 34 percent. National surveys in the Netherlands and Belgium last year on the issue of confidence in the United States reveal age differences roughly similar to those in the other countries. In France, however, age has no influence on confidence levels—close to three-fifths of both young and old expressed at least a fair amount of confidence in US foreign policy. [redacted]

West European youth's relative lack of confidence in US foreign policy does not result from any special concerns about Washington's willingness to come to their aid in a crisis: USIA polls taken in 1981 in the major countries and in the Netherlands show that similarly large majorities among all age groups believed the United States would defend Western Europe. Rather, young people seem to fear that the US military buildup and Washington's assertive policies in Central America and the Middle East may lead to a confrontation that will embroil their countries. Fifty percent of the 18- to 34-year-olds in West Germany and 62 percent of the same group in Italy and the United Kingdom queried in a USIA poll last year believed that US policies were leading toward war. By

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**Greek Youth the Most Anti-Western**

*Greek youth are among the least favorable to the United States and to NATO in Western Europe, probably because of a perception that the United States is biased in favor of Turkey on the Cyprus and Aegean issues and was responsible for the overthrow of Greek democracy in the 1960s. One recent survey by a reputable Greek polling firm suggests that anti-American and anti-Alliance feelings have reached truly alarming proportions among younger Greeks. Fewer than one in 10 of Greeks under 35 indicated they have a good opinion of the United States as opposed to about three out of 10 Greeks over 50. On the other hand, over half the Greeks aged between 18 and 24 said they had a favorable opinion of the Soviet Union. And over two-thirds of those under 34 want Greece out of NATO as compared with less than half of older Greeks.*

contrast, among those over 35, only 31 percent of the West Germans, 47 percent of the Italians, and 52 percent of the British held the same view.

Although younger West Europeans may have qualms about the current direction of US foreign policy, we believe they are neither basically anti-American nor attracted to the Soviet Union. USIA studies undertaken in the early 1980s suggest that Vietnam and Watergate have not had an especially profound impact on youth's overall image of the United States. Younger Italians, West Germans, and Frenchmen—like their elders—considered the United States “trustworthy” and its human rights record favorable. At the same time, they gave the Soviets very low marks for trustworthiness and for their human rights performance. Moreover, according to 1983 USIA data, younger West Europeans are about as likely to be alarmed about the potential of current Soviet policies to lead to war as they are about American policies.

Although they may not be favorable to the Soviet Union, they are not especially fearful of it either. According to USIA surveys, only minuscule numbers of younger people believe that a Soviet invasion is likely; in this respect, however, they are not much

different from the rest of the population. West European youth's lack of concern about a Soviet military threat may reflect, in addition to the general impact of “detente,” their belief that the East-West military balance is either tilted in favor of the United States (France) or at parity (West Germany, Italy). Among the major states, only the United Kingdom's young people believe that the Warsaw Pact holds a military edge over the West. Significantly, a substantial 45 percent of them (about the same proportion as those over 35) are worried about the possibility of Soviet political intimidation; in Italy and West Germany the number of younger people who are similarly worried (respectively 31 and 28 percent) is not only smaller than in the United Kingdom but smaller than the number of older Italians and West Germans expressing such concerns.

**Views on Security Issues.** Because they neither particularly trust the United States nor fear the Soviet Union and because their concern about the environment leads them to be hostile to anything nuclear, younger West Europeans have been generally opposed to the NATO decision on INF deployment. According to USIA estimates, about 85 percent of the anti-INF demonstrators in West Germany have been between 18 and 35, while in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, two-thirds of the demonstrators have fallen into this category. In Belgium and Italy, the proportions of younger people participating in these demonstrations are somewhat smaller—around 50 percent—but still considerably larger than the proportion of 18-to 35-year-olds in the general population.

The prevalence of younger faces in the crowds of anti-INF demonstrators provides a somewhat exaggerated indication, however, of the extent of age differences on the INF question. Younger people are, as noted earlier, generally more inclined than their elders to participate in protest demonstrations, and the absolute number of younger people who have been involved in demonstrations is a very small percentage of the total youth population. The Eurobarometer survey has indeed indicated that while younger people throughout the European Community were massively

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in favor of "antiwar" movements—about 73 percent of the 15- to 24-year-olds and 68 percent of the 25- to 39-year-olds indicated they approved of these movements at least somewhat—substantial majorities of older West Europeans held a similar view. [ ]

Surveys directly probing attitudes on INF deployment have revealed only small differences by age. In three of the INF-basing countries—Italy, the Netherlands, and Belgium—similarly high levels of opposition exist among all age groups in the general population. In the United Kingdom and West Germany, according to mid-1983 USIA surveys, less educated 18- to 35-year-olds were more likely than those over 35 to consider themselves "unconditional opponents" of INF, although only by the modest respective margins of 34 to 24 percent and 42 to 33 percent. [ ]

In addition to opposing INF deployment, younger West Europeans are also hostile to expanding, or even maintaining, their countries' national defense efforts. In polls taken last year in West Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, and France, between three-fifths and three-fourths of young people between 18 and 30 thought current levels of defense spending were too high—and that national budget deficit problems should be resolved through defense cutbacks. Only in France and the Netherlands, however, were older age groups substantially less likely to hold these views. British young people are less opposed to defense spending than their continental counterparts—a 1981 survey indicated that a narrow majority opposed reductions—probably because of their demonstrated greater suspicions of Soviet intentions [ ]

**Security Issues and the Successor Generation.** Recent USIA surveys have provided age breakdowns of the educated elite's attitudes in the United Kingdom, Italy, and West Germany on the United States, the Soviet Union, and INF. As in the case of ideological preferences, it is the West German successor generation that stands most strikingly apart from its elders and from the larger pool of less educated young people:

- In the United Kingdom, the views of the better educated 18- to 34-year-olds do not differ greatly from those of their elder counterparts. Britain's successor elite generation has the same moderate

level of confidence in US foreign and military policies as the older elite; it is even more likely than the older elite to believe that Soviet policies increase the risk of war and to be concerned about Soviet political intimidation. Younger educated Britons are, however, more likely than older ones (43 to 29 percent) to oppose INF deployment.

- In Italy, there is a fairly substantial age gap in the views of the better educated. Those who are 18 to 34 are 30 percentage points more likely to be unconditional opponents of INF deployment, 37 points more likely to believe that US policies are leading toward war, and 20 points less likely to have confidence in US foreign policy. In general, however, the views of better educated younger Italians are close to those of the rest of Italian youth and thus not dramatically different from the older less educated population. It is the older Italian elite that is "out of step" with the rest of the population in being more pro-American and pro-INF.
- In West Germany 63 percent of the successor generation were unconditional opponents of INF as compared with 35 percent of those who are better educated and over 35 and 42 percent of the less educated young. The younger, better educated were 24 percentage points less likely to be concerned about Soviet intimidation than their older counterparts and nine points less likely than their less educated peers. And, whereas 40 percent of those who were better educated and over 35 and 26 percent of those who were less educated and under 35 indicated that they had confidence in US foreign policy, only 21 percent of the successor generation did so. [ ]

Our review of more recent national surveys in Western Europe confirms the extraordinary dimensions of the West German elite generation gap. In one survey, two-thirds of the West German successor generation favored "getting out of East-West politics" as compared with only about a third of the older elite and a similar proportion of the less educated, young or old. Moreover, nearly three-fifths of the successor generation indicated they had no confidence in US foreign

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### *The New Politics in West Germany*

Nowhere in Western Europe have the new politics taken as firm a hold on the younger generation as in West Germany. The Green Party, with its anti-nuclear and participatory emphasis, has attracted far more young people in West Germany than have similar parties in other countries. The West German "alternatives"—who favor withdrawal from the social mainstream into the world of self-governing communes—appear to be significantly larger than the "dropout" populations in other major West European countries. National survey data indicate that large numbers of younger West Germans are hostile to technology and that only a minority adhere strongly to the work ethic—a central feature of the "materialist" outlook. [redacted]

The attitudes of younger West Germans contrast sharply with the strong materialism of their parents' generation. Older West Germans probably place heavier emphasis on the maintenance of economic and social order, and on personal advancement through hard work than their counterparts in other West European countries. These preferences reflect factors unique to West Germany such as their upbringing in traditionally German authoritarian families, their harsh experiences with economic and social disorders (the 1923 inflation and postwar shortages), and their need to keep their "nose to the grindstone" in order to make a success of postwar reconstruction. Today's young have matured within one of the most prosperous and stable economic and political environments in Western Europe—and thus are more strongly inclined to look toward "higher order" values than younger people elsewhere. Moreover, there is evidence that the West German family

structure has loosened up in recent years. According to a West German sociological study, almost half of teenage West Germans reported in 1976 that they could go out at night without informing their parents of their whereabouts as compared with only about 2 percent as late as the mid-1960s. [redacted]

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The strong leftism of the younger West Germans—and particularly of the successor generation—may be in part a reaction to the dominance of materialist values in West German society. Thus it is possible that, as generational replacement brings postmaterialism more into the mainstream of West German thinking, younger people may be less inclined to consider themselves social outsiders—and thus less prone to consider themselves leftists and to vote for antiestablishment parties such as today's Greens. [redacted]

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Academic experts have suggested that the exceptionally critical attitude of younger educated West Germans toward US foreign and security policies reflects in part the legacy of Nazism. The successor generation is probably more aware than youth as a whole of Germany's behavior while under the Nazi regime. They may resent their parents' generation's acquiescence to totalitarianism and their subsequent tendency to "sweep under the rug" Germany's crimes during World War II. They may for this reason be disinclined to adopt their parents' foreign policy preferences, such as support for the United States. Moreover, by being critical of US policies and behavior, they may be displacing their own subconscious sense of guilt over their country's past. [redacted]

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policy while less than a fifth of both the older elite and the rest of the population did so. Among the other five major NATO countries, only in the Netherlands were there gaps between the successor generation and the rest of the population similar to those in West Germany. [redacted]

**Still With NATO.** The major bright spot in the international perspectives of West European youth is their attitudes toward NATO. Despite their critical stance on security issues and on the United States,

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younger West Europeans including the successor generation remain committed to the Atlantic Alliance. Numerous USIA and national surveys in recent years have pointed out that approximately three-fifths or more of less educated 18- to 34-year-olds and similar majorities of better educated young people believe that NATO is still "essential" to their country's national security. Age differences in attitudes toward NATO vary according to the wording of survey questions and the timing of polls. They are generally small in the case of the United Kingdom and the Low Countries, however, and relatively modest in the case of West Germany and Italy. Younger Frenchmen are less supportive of NATO than most other younger West Europeans (somewhat less than half) but are no different in this respect than their "Gaullist"-oriented older compatriots. [ ]

#### **Youth and the Future of West European Politics**

To predict the behavior of West European youth either over the next few years or over the "long term"—when current youth will attain positions of power and influence—it is necessary to determine whether present age-related differences are likely to last over time. There are two possible sources of age-related differences, each of which has profoundly different implications for their persistence:

- They may first of all be products of the "life-cycle" phenomenon. Young people are different from their elders simply because they are young: they have fewer responsibilities and less experience with the harsh realities of the world. They may thus be prone to certain modes of thought, such as idealism and concern for the unfortunate. As they acquire responsibilities and experience with age, however, their attitudes may increasingly become more hardheaded. To the extent that age differences reflect the life cycle, they will fade over time.
- Age differences can also result from changing historical and social circumstances, what social scientists call generational sources. Common experiences of major historical developments such as wars or depressions can leave a psychic imprint on young individuals which may condition their future thought and behavior—and set them apart from those who matured under different circumstances. Moreover, major socioeconomic changes can alter

the relative size of various demographic groupings—the educated, the affluent, the religious, for example—and thus change the aggregate attitudes of the affected generation. Unlike life-cycle differences, "generational" differences tend to persist, although their strength will be affected by changes in the political and economic environment facing a young generation as it matures. [ ]

Because of the absence of long-term comparable data on West European public attitudes, it is not possible at this point to gauge the relative importance of life-cycle and generational causes of age-related differences in political attitudes, much less the impact of ongoing events on these differences as a young generation matures. Thus predictions about the behavior of the younger generation cannot be made with any sense of certainty. We believe, however, that the use of the following common sense "rules of thumb" can help clarify the significance that current age-related differences in political attitudes may have for future West European politics:

- Age differences in the general population which have a basis in demographic changes such as the level of education—either alone or in addition to the common experience of historical events—are likely to persist in some form despite the aging process or subsequent developments, because such changes will exert a continuing influence on attitudes.
- Small or moderate differences in generational attitudes on specific issues (10 to 15 points between two groups)—which popular writers often point to with alarm—should not be taken very seriously as harbingers of future political change. Even if such differences were fully generational in nature, and, thus likely to persist, they would produce only a glacial change in overall public opinion—since the survival of the current middle age group into old age will dilute their impact. In general, we believe that only differences in opinion which are wide, persistent over time, and consistent across a range of related issues—as in West Germany—should be seen as raising a real prospect for generational changes in politics or policy. [ ]

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**Young People and Democratic Institutions.** Given that most West European youth are generally satisfied with their life situations, not unduly pessimistic about their futures, supportive of their country's democratic institutions, and opposed to political violence, it is highly unlikely they will resort to mass antidemocratic behavior—such as participating in civil disturbances in large numbers. It is even less likely that they will do so when they age, since the propensity for this type of behavior is a life-cycle phenomenon limited mainly to youth. To be sure, a small youth culture comprising the “alternatives” as well as hooligans of various stripe (such as punks and chaotics) probably will persist for at least a few more years. Thus, house squatting and the occasional violent protest will continue to absorb the attention of West European law enforcement and municipal authorities. The success of outgoing West Berlin Mayor Richard Von Weizsaecker in dramatically reducing the incidence of squatting in his city (as reported by the US Mission in West Berlin) through a firm but measured approach to law enforcement suggests, however, that youth culture's threat to social order can be contained by competent authorities.<sup>3</sup> [ ]

We can identify two possible short-term developments that might bring youthful unrest to levels that would concern West European governments. One would be a governmental decision—which the Thatcher government has been contemplating in the United Kingdom—to cut youth unemployment benefits, whose currently fairly generous levels probably have played a role in keeping youthful frustration in bounds. The second would be a sharp upsurge in youthful unemployment, such as is currently taking place in West Germany. Sociologists argue that the unemployed are most likely to resort to violent protest soon after losing their jobs or after their initial efforts to gain employment because their level of frustration is highest then. [ ]

We suspect that the potential for youthful unrest will decline over the course of the decade. West European birth rates fell sharply beginning in the late 1960s and thus the number of older adolescents and young adults will fall by the late 1980s (see table 3). This

<sup>3</sup> According to press reports, Amsterdam officials are also close to eliminating their city's longstanding squatter problem. [ ]

**Table 3**  
**OECD Forecast of Annual**  
**Youth Population**  
**Growth Trends,**  
**1985-90**

	Ages 15-19	Ages 20-24
West Germany	-8.4	-1.3
Denmark	-1.3	0
France	-0.3	-0.6
Italy	-1.1	0.3
Netherlands	-3.1	-0.5
United Kingdom	-2.1	-0.7
Sweden	-1.0	0.5

decline in the youth population will decrease the number of new recruits for the alternative culture and violence-prone groups, whose own ranks probably will have been depleted anyway because of the aging of current members. It should also reduce unemployment among 15- to 24-year-olds and with it the sense of frustration that could lead to unrest among this potentially volatile group.<sup>4</sup> [ ]

The most durable difference, in our judgment, in the attitudes of younger and older West Europeans toward democratic institutions is likely to be on the question of political participation. The young—particularly the better educated successor generation—are considerably more inclined to favor direct forms of participation such as petition drives, citizen action groups, and demonstrations. We think that this is a generational phenomenon and that today's younger West Europeans will continue to hold this preference

<sup>4</sup> Because we expect overall unemployment levels to remain high at least through the end of this decade [ ]

[ ] many of today's younger generation will continue to experience joblessness and underemployment as they mature. Although public opinion data suggest that unemployment has not as yet had a profound impact on youth attitudes, the possibility that prolonged economic hardship might lead to increasing alienation cannot be wholly discounted. [ ]

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as they age because direct participation satisfies the needs of a fairly well-educated generation for self-expression. [ ]

Increased direct citizen participation in the policy process could have positive consequences for West European societies, such as increased bureaucratic sensitivity to public preferences, but also some drawbacks for them, and for US interests as well.<sup>5</sup> Leading scholars have argued that such participation can render governments ineffective by increasing the opportunities for blocking policies or disrupting their implementation. The continuing activities of the peace movement against INF and the efforts of antinuclear power activists are cases in point. Given that the better educated are likely to be disproportionately involved in direct participation—and that this group is favorable to environmentalism and in some countries hostile to security cooperation with the United States—such participation could restrain West European economic growth and complicate the task of sustaining the US military presence in Western Europe. [ ]

#### Youth and the Political Balance

Whether today's younger generation will continue to vote disproportionately for the left is obviously a question of central importance both for predicting the course of domestic politics and foreign policy. Popular wisdom favors a life-cycle interpretation of youthful voting behavior—the young vote left because of their idealism and “compassion,” then turn to more conservative parties as they age to protect their personal economic interests. To test this view we have compared the expressed partisan affiliation of various age groups of West Europeans in 1983 with the affiliations expressed by similar groups eight years earlier, in 1975. The findings of this comparison, displayed in table 4, show little or no movement to the right—and in a few cases some movement to the left—among the age groups examined. Although these results may to

<sup>5</sup> A good example of the drawbacks is the declaration of the West German Green Party in February 1984 that it would exploit its membership on the parliamentary committee overseeing intelligence operations to disclose military secrets if this was in the public interest. The West German parliament subsequently voted to exclude the Greens from the oversight committee. In the future, when the successor generation has more power and influence, it will, of course, be far more difficult to curb such departures from convention. [ ]

some extent reflect the timing of the surveys that are compared, they do suggest that there will not necessarily be a progression toward center-right parties as the younger generation matures. [ ]

We believe that a large number of today's 18- to 35-year-olds will continue to identify broadly with parties of the left over the next five or 10 years, and probably even when they reach middle age. Our judgment is based on our belief that the postmaterialist preferences of the young—which appear to be the key factor behind their disproportionate support for the left—derive from basic socioeconomic factors such as their affluent upbringings and high levels of education. They are thus unlikely to fade substantially. It is arguable, of course, that the serious economic problems which Western Europe is likely to face in coming years could prompt a return to materialism—and a turn toward more conservative politics. However, the Eurobarometer survey finding that 25- to 34-year-old West Europeans were almost as postmaterialist in 1982 as they were when they were 10 years younger—despite their likely acquisition of greater responsibilities and the deterioration of Western Europe's economic performance over this period—points against this view, particularly in West Germany. [ ]

Despite the probable continuing general preference of today's young for leftist parties, we do not see future leftist dominance of West European politics as inevitable or even likely:

- Young people may vote disproportionately now for leftist parties, but they are not, as shown earlier, leftist in a conventional sense: majorities place themselves on the center or right of the ideological spectrum, and there is little or no age difference on views of corporations, trade unions, or the need for governmental intervention. If left-of-center parties were to pursue an old left agenda of widespread nationalization and centralized control of society, they might well lose a substantial portion of the current young generation's support. We note, in this connection, the British Labor Party's loss of about a fifth of its younger supporters—mainly to the Social Democratic Liberal Alliance—when it ran on an aggressively socialist program in the 1983 election.

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**Table 4**  
**Partisan Change and Aging**  
**1975-83**

Percent

	Less Than 21 Years in 1975	18-29 Years in 1983	22-31 Years in 1975	30-39 Years in 1983	32-46 Years in 1975	30-59 Years in 1983	47-Plus Years in 1975	60-Plus Years in 1983
Supporting left-of-center parties in 1975	60		61		46		40	
Supporting left-of-center parties in 1983		66		58		49		46
Supporting center and right- wing parties 1975	40		39		54		60	
Supporting center and right- wing parties 1983		34		42		51		54

- The West European public's loyalty to political parties is likely, in our judgment, to weaken in the years to come. Studies in the United Kingdom have shown that strong partisanship has been on the decline among all age groups in recent years, probably because of skepticism that either the Labor or Conservative Party can halt the United Kingdom's steady economic slide. Because the economies of the other West European countries are also likely to suffer stagnation in the years ahead, voting patterns among all age groups are likely to become increasingly less rigid and more influenced by personalities and issues in individual elections. This will probably mean increased governmental turnover, thus limiting the ability of future leftist governments to carry out extensive programs of socioeconomic change. Greater fluidity among electorates will also permit centrist parties to increase their share of the current young generation's vote if they can present candidates or programs that address some of its new politics concerns.

- As recent events in West Germany suggest, the political left could divide between economic-growth-oriented parties, such as the Social Democrats, and new politics-oriented parties such as the Greens, thus paving the way to victory for center-right parties.

We think it more likely that close left/right competition rather than leftist dominance will result from generational replacement. But, whoever governs, West European political discourse, in our view, is likely to focus increasingly on the new politics agenda because of its popularity among the younger university educated—the successor generation that will soon acquire positions of power within the bureaucracy, the media, and other influential institutions.

#### Youth and the Atlantic Alliance

We believe that the chances that today's younger generation will have a major impact on basic foreign policy stances in Western Europe are likely to be small in countries such as the United Kingdom, France, and Belgium; somewhat greater in Italy and the Netherlands; and greatest in West Germany.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Even if generational replacement failed to produce significant changes in any of the major NATO allies, this would not mean a climate of opinion in Western Europe favorable to US and Alliance interests. USIA studies indicate that, although West Europeans of all ages remain committed to NATO, they are decreasingly confident in US foreign policy. In Britain, for example, the overall level of public confidence in the United States has declined from the 50- to 70-percent range during the 1960s and 1970s to the 45- to 55-percent range in the 1980s. Similar downward trends are evident in West Germany, Italy, and several other allied countries.

We doubt that the younger generations in the United Kingdom and Belgium will alter those countries' pro-Atlanticist orientations or that France's young people will fundamentally change its policy of pro-Western "independence." Age differences in these countries in the surveys we have reviewed have been small on basic foreign policy questions and thus not likely to change the climate of opinion sufficiently to affect government policy. The impact of these differences will be further diluted, at least over the short term, because only minute portions of younger people in these countries believe that foreign or security issues constitute their countries' top problem, a designation that the vast majority of them apply to unemployment. Finally, the successor generations in these countries appear to think and thus probably will act, much like the current elite. [redacted]

In the Netherlands and Italy, differences among the general population on foreign policy questions are also generally on the small side. There, too, most young people are also primarily concerned with economic issues. At the same time we have found some substantial differences among the educated elite on such questions as INF deployment, confidence in the United States, fear of Soviet political intimidation, and the preference for getting out of East-West politics. These differences indicate that, in the future, elites in these countries might seek more independent paths in international affairs. We think it should be kept in mind, however, that the successor generations in both countries remain overwhelmingly committed to NATO, and that the relative weakness of both countries will circumscribe their freedom of action. [redacted]

We do foresee the possibility of a new "youth" problem in the foreign affairs area arising toward the end of this decade. Despite widespread antidefense sentiments, Western Europe has been able to avoid draft protests up to now. This is partly because the existence of a large manpower pool has permitted liberal—and growing—use of conscientious objector status and health deferments to allow evasion. Moreover, the poor job market has made service in the military an attractive alternative for some youths. Because the decline in the youth population will both dry up the manpower pool and improve the youth job market, the possibility of tomorrow's young generation taking to the streets to oppose conscription must be taken seriously. [redacted]

**The West German Case.** We believe that the chances that the younger generation will affect basic foreign policy are greatest in West Germany. In view of that country's linchpin role in NATO and the EC, this could have profound repercussions for all of Western Europe. Age differences on international issues between the West German successor generation and older West Germans tend to be somewhat larger than in the other countries. Age differences in West Germany are particularly pronounced among adherents of leftist parties (table 5). [redacted]

Our survey of public opinion polls shows that younger educated West Germans—particularly those with leftist sympathies—are far more critical of US foreign policy and inclined to stay out of US-Soviet conflicts than their older counterparts. They may thus be inclined at least to move West German foreign policy in a more independent direction when they assume power. Because their world views may reflect in part deep-seated psychological complexes arising from the legacy of the Nazis, the successor elite generation cannot necessarily be expected to modify its views simply as a result of aging. [redacted]

Within the SPD, the impact of young leftists has already begun to be felt. Although the party is still controlled by older, Helmut Schmidt-style Social Democrats, party leaders are taking steps to recapture the support of young leftists who bolted in 1983 to vote for the Greens. The SPD has revised its stance on INF deployment, and, in the interest of electoral expediency, it may trim further the pro-Alliance aspects of its foreign policy. [redacted]

Although we believe that generational replacement could bring about changes in West German foreign policy, we also think that there are two important facts which could act to limit the extent of those changes:

- Continuity on the Center-Right. Younger people who identify with the Christian Democrats and the Free Democrats share the basic international perspectives of their elder counterparts with the exception of the INF issue. This suggests these parties

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**Table 5**  
**Views on Key International Issues,**  
**by Age and Party Preference,**  
**Percent Answering Negatively**

	1. Deploy INF					2. Stay in NATO				
	West Germany	France	Italy	Netherlands	Belgium	West Germany	France	Italy	Netherlands	Belgium
<b>Left</b>										
18-34	68		76	66	74	6	7	8	5	12
35 and over	50		74	57	70	4	10	7	9	9
<b>Right</b>										
18-34	26		48	18	64	2	6	4	2	7
35 and over	21		53	15	58	4	7	3	3	3
	3. Have Confidence in United States					4. Stay Allied With United States				
	West Germany	France	Italy	Netherlands	Belgium	West Germany	France	Italy	Netherlands	Belgium
<b>Left</b>										
18-34	39	22	34	17	30	65	64	66	53	55
35 and over	15	27	24	19	26	42	73	61	43	53
<b>Right</b>										
18-34	3	3	8	2	5	12	34	26	14	31
35 and over	4	5	5	4	8	12	36	21	10	22

<sup>a</sup> Negative answers signify cancel deployment; not essential for country to continue to belong to NATO; no confidence in United States to deal responsibly with world problems; and stay out of East-West politics.

will be under far less electoral pressure than their leftist counterparts to alter their foreign policy positions and are also less likely to be taken over by anti-American or proneutralist elites. To the extent that these parties govern or participate in governing in the future, the impact of generational replacement probably will be greatly reduced.

- The young still look Westward. Younger West Germans of all political persuasions and educational levels overwhelmingly favor continued participation in NATO. Moreover, the young, according to recent polls, are less interested than older groups in the possibility of German reunification—the principal bait which the Soviet Bloc might dangle to entice Bonn into neutralism.

Thus we do not see it as inevitable or even likely that West Germany will leave the Western fold as a result of generational replacement. But it probably will become a more independent and difficult partner on economic issues and on arms control and other defense issues.

<sup>7</sup> Domestically, generational replacement could also produce significant changes in politics and policy because of the special emphasis that the young place on postmaterialist values. For instance, protection of West Germany's forests from the alleged threat of "acid rain" may become as important a political issue as the promotion of industrial growth. Parties headed by politicians who offend postmaterialist sensibilities may find it increasingly difficult to obtain political office. For example, under the leadership of the stern traditionalist Franz Josef Strauss, the CDU/CSU suffered a sharp drop in youthful support in the 1980 election.

### Conclusion

In sum, we believe that the present generation of West European youth, while not as iconoclastic or politically radical as youth in the 1960s, will nonetheless serve as a catalyst of change. Fewer of today's youth are likely to follow the traditional political pattern of becoming more conservative as they marry, have children, and acquire an economic stake in the status quo. More of today's youth will, we judge, probably retain their leftist political views. As noted earlier, however, this could have the effect of fragmenting and weakening the political left rather than strengthening it. [REDACTED]

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In the area of foreign and security policy, young people—particularly the successor generation—are likely to be in the forefront of those favoring a reduced defense effort, greater independence from the United States, and detente with the Soviet Union. But they are by no means likely to be alone. If recent trends are a guide, such sentiments will be held increasingly by West European publics in general. In that sense, the oft-repeated concerns of those such as Chancellor Kohl about the dangers of a growing generation gap are misplaced. It is not so much a divergence but a convergence of generational views that leaders on both sides of the Atlantic must contend with—at least on security issues. [REDACTED]

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Perhaps the present youth generation's most durable and consequential contribution to West European politics is the change it is forging in the norms of political behavior. Young people's predilection for participatory politics and direct action already appears to be giving them disproportionate influence on governments' capabilities, decisionmaking, and policies. Although such forms of expression are politically neutral and could thus be adopted by those supportive of a strong defense effort and close ties with the United States, their impact in the short run is to make it difficult for governments to be responsive allies. [REDACTED]

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